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The *Procurator Bibliothecarum* at Rome

Lorne D. Bruce

Archaeological work commenced in the later part of the nineteenth century furnishes a great deal of our existing information on classical Roman libraries and their administrators. Because excavation continues to uncover new epigraphic and papyrus documents, correlation of literary references with archaeological discoveries is necessary to assess the value of both contributions. From epigraphic evidence concerning imperial library directors, it is possible to trace a historical outline of the administration of public libraries at Rome in the first and second centuries. For example, Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, the celebrated Roman biographer, was representative of the new equestrian administrator, scholar, and writer who appeared in first- and second-century Rome. His particular interest in libraries at the capital has often been utilized in modern studies to establish facts about these libraries, especially those founded by Augustus (31 B.C.-A.D. 14).¹ Yet the fact that Suetonius spent a short part of his administrative career as director of libraries, *procurator bibliothecarum* or *a bibliothecis*, was completely unknown until publication in 1952 of fragments from an inscription discovered by archaeological investigation at the ancient site of Hippo Regius, modern Annaba or Bône on the Mediterranean coast of Algeria.² Thus, Suetonius's references to libraries and the cultured literati who served as library administrators are testimony to his firsthand knowledge of library development, and his use of documentary details about libraries becomes more authoritative for research being conducted now.

The technique of using biographical information to study the holders of the library directorate in the first three centuries A.D. is useful for various purposes: to examine the significance of their position in relation to other offices; to see the changing role of

the library director; and to know the social status of men who occupied this position during the Principate.³ Knowledge of the careers of men appointed as directors also helps to explain the development of public library service at Rome, especially its essentially passive character. Of course, it must be kept in mind that library procurators, and libraries themselves, are not extensively documented: careful examination of limited sources is required to understand general trends. Future discoveries will expand the present state of our knowledge.

The Equestrian Career

Standard studies on the daily administration of public libraries in Rome by the library procurator were completed before extensive research on equestrian and freedmen procurators was published in the last three decades.⁴ An *equus Romanus* was usually a freeborn Roman citizen of financial means valued at 400,000 sesterces, less than half the value required for senatorial rank.⁵ Knowledge of the equestrian order and its career patterns is essential to understand the development of the Roman library directorate.⁶ The procurator was a direct agent of the emperor, who made appointments throughout the empire with the assistance of his advisors. During the first century, procurators were often freedmen (emancipated slaves with citizenship rights) of various backgrounds.⁷ Normally, freedmen came from the emperor's staff (*familia Caesaris*). They performed a broad range of tasks encompassing private, public, and semipublic functions. Domestic staff were employed primarily in the maintenance of imperial properties and residences in Rome and elsewhere in Italy. Administrative staff were frequently employed in financial or departmental duties, supervising many services such as libraries, public baths, roads, aqueducts, mints, and so on. This dichotomous arrangement between personal and civil service functions was in many cases ambiguous, but it served as a general distinction and may be used to explain how libraries were administered.

Beginning with the Flavian dynasty in 69, important procuratorial positions were frequently held by men promoted from equestrian ranks. Equites were comfortably settled members of the upper class, and usually enjoyed certain traditional privileges, such as serving as jurors in Roman courts. For most men, promotion to imperial offices was the greatest reward. As a result, equestrian career officers were loyal to the emperor. The important point is that equestrian status did not prepare officials for specific

duties such as a *bibliothecis*. The Roman library director was therefore not a responsible public official in the modern sense; instead, he was a state officer whose ultimate well-being, status, and future prospects depended on the emperor's acquaintance with his abilities and performance. Entry into equestrian posts normally began with service in the *tres militiae*, as prefect of an infantry cohort of auxiliary troops, tribune of a legion, and prefect of a cavalry regiment of auxiliaries. After this initial experience, equites could attain the post of *primus pilus*, first-ranking centurion of a legion, serve as a tribune of a fire brigade, police force, or praetorian cohort at Rome, then return to a second legionary command as *primus pilus* before being recommended for a more important equestrian civil administrative or provincial position. It was not until the reign of Hadrian (117–138 A.D.) that a civilian entry point designed for legal counsels in the imperial treasury (*advocatus fisci*) appeared. Service in all these positions was not necessary: some men might serve in a few posts, and others might spend many years in relatively minor offices before securing a better position.

After an equestrian had gained experience in the junior ranks, more prestigious administrative positions were open for career advancement. Procurators served the emperor in many roles: as provincial governors of small provinces, as imperial finance officers and managers of imperial property, as directors of a rapidly growing number of public services in Rome (or throughout the empire), or as ministers of the secretariats in the emperor's central administration. These ministerial positions were coveted because ambitious men could gain access to the emperor on a regular basis as *ab epistulis*, secretary-general in charge of official correspondence; a *patrimonio*, minister of imperial properties; a *libellis*, minister in charge of petitions; a *studiis*, the emperor's literary advisor; a *cognitionibus*, secretary of legal offices; or a *rationibus*, chief finance minister.⁸ At the summit of the equestrian career were four great prefectures: *praefectus vigilum*, commander of the fire brigade and night watch at Rome; *praefectus annonae*, commander of the corn and bread supply at Rome; *praefectus Aegypti*, governor of Egypt; and the praetorian prefect, *praefectus praetorio*, commander of the emperor's Praetorian Guard at Rome. For talented men with records of successful performance and political friendships, these posts were reasonably accessible. Indeed, there were a number of library directors who secured prestigious positions, despite the nonmilitary nature of the library directorship.

The pay for procuratorial offices was graded into four salary divisions—the *sexagenarii* (those who received 60,000 sesterces each year), *centenarii*, *ducenarii*, and *tricenarii* (those who received 100,000, 200,000, and 300,000 sesterces, respectively). In the second century the library director was well paid: he was classed as a *ducenarius*, equal in rank to governors in Britain, Spain, and other small provinces in the upper echelon of this grade.⁹ The library procurator was distinguished from other officers because he was essentially an urban, civilian professional working mostly in Rome, not a military commander or provincial legate who rarely held urban posts in the capital.¹⁰ These three distinct career paths in an equestrian cursus were not completely rigid. Naturally, it was always possible for exceptional men to advance rapidly because of their military or civilian skills, or finagle promotions by using contacts at court.¹¹ Candidates for the position of *procurator bibliothecarum* essentially were interested in literary studies or related educational careers such as jurisprudence. Thus, this urban position was attractive in the first century and a half after Augustus, although few equestrians were satisfied to remain in charge of libraries or stay in one post for a lengthy period. The emphasis on one professional occupation was foreign to the Roman “civil service.”

Typical Library Careers

The epigraphic remains from excavations, the text of Suetonius's *De vita Caesarum*, and other literary sources offer valuable information about the history of the library director. The careers of men who occupied this office, its antecedents, and analogous positions from Augustus to the middle of the third century demonstrate that it was a relatively important position that attracted very capable candidates. Their progressive career offices follow below (complete sources for eight equestrians are given by Pflaum, *Les carrières*, and his numbering system is used for these men).

- (1) C. Julius Hyginus:¹² *praefuit Palatinae bibliothecae, nec eo secius plurimos docuit; fuitque familiarissimus Ovidio poetae et Clodio Licino consulari, historico, qui eum admodum pauperem decessisse tradit et liberalitate sua, quoad vixerit, sustentatum.*
- (2) G. Maecenas Melissus:¹³ *Quo delegante, curam ordinandarum bibliothecarum in Octaviae porticu suscepit.*

- (3) Cn. Pompeius Macer: *qui ordinandas bibliothecas delegaverat.*
 (Pflaum, no. B2) *proc. provinciae Asiae*
- (4) T. Julius Pappus:¹⁴ *comes Tiberius*
supra bibliothecas omnes Augustorum
- (5) T. Claudius Scirtus:¹⁵ *proc. bybliothecharum*
- (6) Dionysius Alexandrinus: *archiereus musei Alexandrini*
 (Pflaum, no. 46) *proc. bibliothecarum*
ab epistulis et responsis ad legationes
- (7) C. Suetonius Tranquillus: *flamen*
 (Pflaum, no. 96) *adlectus inter selectos*
pontifex Volcanalis
a studiis
a bibliothecis
ab epistulis
- (8) Valerius Eudaemon: *proc. ad dioecesein Alexandriae*
 (Pflaum, no. 110) *proc. bibliothecarum Graecarum et*
Latinarum
ab epistulis Graecis
proc. provinciae Lyciae et Pamphyliae,
Galatae, Paphlagoniae, Pisidiae, Ponti
proc. hereditatum et provinciae Asiae
proc. Syriae
praefectus Aegypti
- (9) L. Julius Vestinus: *archiereus Alexandriae et totius*
 (Pflaum, no. 105) *Aegyptus*
archiereus musei Alexandrini
proc. bibliothecarum Romanarum et
Graecarum Romae
a studiis
ab epistulis
- (10) L. Volusius Maecianus: *praefectus fabrum*
 (Pflaum, no. 141) *praefectus cohortis I Aeliae classicae*
adiutor operum publicorum
a libellis
praefectus vehiculorum
a studiis et proc. bibliothecarum
a libellis et censibus
pontifex minor
praefectus annonae
praefectus Aegypti
praefectus aerari Saturni
consul designatus

- (11) Annii Postumus: *proc. Augusti a bibliothecis* = *proc. bibliothecarum divi Trajani*
(Pflaum, no. 132) *proc. promagistro vicesimae hereditatium*
proc. Augusti ad annonae Ostis
proc. provinciae Pannoniae inferioris
- (12) T. Aelius Largus:¹⁶ *proc. Augusti bibliothecarum*
iuris publici et privati peritissimus
- (13) L. Baebius Aurelius Juncinus: *proc. bybliothecarum ad*
(Pflaum, no. 251) *sestertium LX milia*
proc. ad annonae Ostis
praefectus vehiculorum ad sestertium
C milia
praefectus vehiculorum ad sestertium
CC milia
praefectus provinciae Sardiniae
proc. vicesimae hereditatium
praefectus Aegypti
- (14) Sextus Julius Africanus:¹⁷ *Romae Severo Alexandro biblio-*
thecam condidit iuxta thermas
Alexandri in Pantheo
- (15) Q. Veturius Callistratus:¹⁸ *proc. rationum summarum priva-*
tatum bibliothecarum Agusti
procurator . . .

The characteristics that are presented in modern scholarly analyses of all procuratorial posts during the first three centuries apply to the careers of library directors. First, there was an evolution from promotion of freedmen to equites during the later part of the first century when the director of libraries assumed more responsibility and became recognized as an important urban officer. In the early period of the Principate, imperial freedmen and their descendants often benefited by receiving promotions because of their proximity to the emperor. The reign of Claudius was notable for the domination of secretarial posts by influential imperial freedmen.¹⁹ It was during this initial period that talented freedmen like Julius Hyginus, Gaius Melissus, and Julius Pappus could gain the personal confidence of the emperor and attain public office without previous administrative experience. But beginning with the appointment of Dionysius of Alexandria, equestrians regularly were appointed *a bibliothecis*. In theory, by this means better-qualified candidates were attracted to the library office. In fact, this process was an element of Roman social prejudice that worked to exclude ex-slaves and their immediate descendants from important positions.

Second, the men recruited especially for urban posts in Rome, like the library director, were not associated with the military background that was usual for most procurators, but often were men with cosmopolitan skills, such as knowledge of the Greek language.²⁰ Valerius Eudaemon and Pompeius Macer both served in the financial administration of eastern provinces. Greek expertise in library administration was advantageous, but not essential: only two men, Dionysius of Alexandria and Julius Vestinus, were directors of the Alexandrian museum before they served as a *bibliothecis* in Rome. In the second century judicial expertise became another important asset: both Volusius Maecianus and Aelius Largus appear after Hadrianic legal reforms.

Third, the importance of personal contacts facilitating career advancement, in the case of Suetonius and Maecianus, often was crucial for a procurator.²¹ Promotion did not necessarily depend upon a candidate following a rigid, mechanical pattern. With the exception of Maecianus, no library director pursued a typical career pattern during his initial offices because of predominant civilian experience. In this respect, a fourth factor, the absence of evidence demonstrating that the library procurator was a specialized, professional position in the modern sense, is significant.²² The post of *procurator bibliothecarum* was merely one office in the equestrian cursus that candidates attained. Use of influence to secure recommendations for more suitable positions was not uncommon. There was no emphasis on library education or training—the directorship of libraries was an office open to men from diversified backgrounds with a general aptitude for public service.²³ In this case, the consequences for developing a comprehensive library service were mostly negative. There was seldom attention to management issues or new plans for providing services; instead, career advancement or loyalty to the existing regime were prevailing sentiments.

Library Administration during the Principate

The origin of the library directorate at Rome rested in the imperial household of Augustus. Undoubtedly, the promotions of Hyginus and Melissus, teachers and writers whom Augustus confidently appointed as separate overseers of the library on the Palatine beside the temple of Apollo (after 28/23 B.C.) and the library in the Porticus Octaviae (after 23 B.C.), were part of the emperor's expansion of powers as *princeps*. Suetonius speaks favorably of their character and ability. Hyginus came to the capital from Spain

to teach students and to write. He enjoyed a lasting friendship with Ovid, who addressed him in *Tristia* 3.14, written shortly after the poet's exile to Tomis in A.D. 8.²⁴ As a consequence of his relationship with Ovid, Hyginus may have lost imperial favor, for Suetonius relates that he died in complete poverty despite writings encompassing many subjects: agriculture, history, religion, a commentary on Vergil, and archaeology. Melissus was teacher for Gaius Maecenas, loyal confidant of the emperor, but was less prolific than Hyginus.²⁵ He wrote a form of drama, *fabula trabeata*, and completed a book of jests, *ineptiae*. In the beginning, therefore, Augustus did not create a procuratorial position for libraries in Rome, and he remained satisfied with the decentralized administration of separate libraries by freedmen until the later part of his reign.

Information on the successor to Hyginus and Melissus, Pompeius Macer, is less precise, possibly because his family incurred disgrace in A.D. 33. Although his family origin was Greek, he had become an *eques* connected with Augustus's retinue, and was given the task of consolidating all libraries in Rome under one office before A.D. 5. Pflaum regards this as a procuratorial post because Macer also served as an agent for imperial properties in the province of Asia.²⁶ However, the 1958 discovery of a dedication to Tiberius Julius Pappus, who was *supra bibliothecas omnes Augustorum* during the three reigns of Tiberius, Gaius, and Claudius (14-54), casts doubt on Pflaum's hypothesis. Pappus, another man of Greek origin, was certainly Macer's successor, a *comes* of Tiberius, and a Roman citizen, but not an *eques*. His promotion depended on his position in the imperial retinue and Tiberius's philhellenic attitude, not on his status or service in an emerging equestrian cursus. His jurisdiction implied supervision of the libraries in the Temple of Augustus, House of Augustus, Temple of Apollo, Tiberian palace, Porticus Octaviae, and Atrium Libertatis. Perhaps the imperial private libraries in Italian villas were included, although it is more probable that freedmen or slaves were in charge under the direction of procurators of estates until the second century. The primary duty of Macer and Pappus was to rationalize the management of newly constructed libraries in the capital.

Not until Scirtus, a freedman of Claudius, was an imperial library procurator documented. Claudius was a keen antiquarian, writer, and patron of the arts. He personally arranged to have a new room in the Alexandrian museum constructed so that his own Etruscan and Carthaginian histories could be read and recited.²⁷

He was, as well, the author of several lengthy works that have not survived: a Roman history commencing after the civil wars, a book on a theory of adding three new letters to the Latin alphabet, an autobiography in eight books, and a defense of Cicero.²⁸ On the basis of existing evidence, therefore, Claudius was the first emperor to make the library directorate a procuratorial office, for he possessed the organizational inclination to implement this change, which lasted for a century.

After Claudius, the *procurator bibliothecarum* is frequently recorded. Dionysius of Alexandria, a skilled Greek grammarian, held the directorship sometime between the reigns of Nero and Trajan, c. 54–117. Prior to his appointment, he had been in charge of the Alexandrian museum, and subsequently he was promoted as *ab epistulis* in charge of letters, legations, and verdicts. Beginning with his tenure it became normal practice for an equestrian to serve as director. Suetonius comments on this general development, dating to the Flavian period, in *Domitianus* 7.2; half of the more important court appointments, formerly held by freedmen, were from this point on reserved for equestrians. This policy opened the way for the notable men who held the library directorate at Rome during the first half of the second century.

Suetonius was the most prominent Roman director.²⁹ He was the son of a military tribune, born about 70, possibly at Hippo Regius, where it appears he held a local priesthood. Later, he moved to Rome, where his early vocation as a *grammaticus* was distinguished; he established an influential friendship with Pliny the Younger, who obtained a military tribunate that Suetonius declined to receive because he was not interested in military appointments. About 111 he served on Pliny's staff in Bithynia and was recommended to Trajan for the right of *ius trium liberorum*, the privileges granted to the parents of three children (Suetonius was married, but childless) that the emperor generously bestowed. After this grant, he was selected to serve on a jury of equites in Rome, then became *pontifex Volcanalis*, priest of Vulcan at Rome, or perhaps Ostia. Both offices were suitable for a man with literate tastes, an antiquarian who could continue to write and research while serving in an official capacity. His career culminated in three posts at court as a *studiis*, a *bibliothecis*, and *ab epistulis* between 114 and 122, but his advancement ended suddenly when Hadrian dismissed him in Britain because he allegedly behaved indiscreetly with Sabina, the emperor's wife. Suetonius's abrupt censure ruined his chances for further advancement. He retired to finish the histories and biographies that he had already commenced.

During the following quarter of a century Valerius Eudaemon, L. Julius Vestinus, and L. Volusius Maecianus were directors. Eudaemon's knowledge of Greek and the eastern provinces was to prove beneficial for his advancement under Hadrian. He began as *procurator ad dioecessin Alexandriae*, a financial responsibility. Before 125 he became *procurator bibliothecarum Graecarum et Latinarum*, the first indication that both Greek and Latin sections of public libraries were under one procurator's charge, although this has been assumed for the entire first century. Thereafter, he returned to the eastern provinces for a lengthy stay at three important commands until Hadrian dismissed him about 136. Eudaemon's fortune revived when Antoninus Pius offered him one of the most prestigious posts in the equestrian cursus: in 142 he became *praefectus Aegypti*, governing this rich province from the provincial capital, Alexandria, where he had started his career two decades before. Vestinus was a respected sophist and writer who had administered the Alexandrian museum before Hadrian selected him as director in Rome. After c. 130 he remained at court as *a studiis*, then *ab epistulis*.³⁰ Both Eudaemon and Vestinus were cultivated, intelligent administrators who complemented the hellenic temperament of Hadrian's policies.

Another director from this period, Maecianus, was an exceptional career *equus*: he served in three positions, primarily military in nature, before reaching the secretarial post *a libellis* in 138. Later, about 145, he occupied the unique combined post, *a studiis et proc. bibliothecarum*, under Antoninus Pius. Subsequently, he became a ranking imperial jurisconsult and was selected as *praefectus Aegypti* by his former student, the emperor Marcus Aurelius, about 161. Maecianus's rise was capped with selection to the senatorial order and title of *consul designatus* for his successful, loyal years of service. Like Suetonius and Hyginus, Maecianus was a prolific writer. His legal offerings included *Assis distributio*, a reference work on inheritance; *De lege Rhodia*; *De iudicis publicis* in fourteen books; and a legal reference work on trusts in sixteen books, *Quaestiones de fideicommissa*.³¹

Under the directorate of Maecianus, transformation in the administration of Roman libraries is evident: the reason he held a combined office at the *ducenarius* level appears to be that various second-level procuratorships for libraries at the *sexagenarius* level, the lowest pay scale, were created by Hadrian and/or Antoninus Pius. To be sure, the *proc. Augusti bibliothecarum* continues to be recorded; however, the epigraphic arrangement of titles and different terminology indicates that some innovations were intro-

duced, the first since Claudius established a procurator for libraries. Men of the quality of Aurelius Juncinus, who served as director before his nomination as *praefectus Aegypti* about 213, still served as library procurators. Nevertheless, the offices were different from the traditional one at the *ducenarius* scale. Juncinus was definitely paid at the lower rate of 60,000 sesterces, and three commands separate his library work from his fifth office as governor of Sardinia, previously a position equivalent to the *a bibliothecis* in the early second century.

Modification first appears in the evidence relating to Annius Postumus, c. 117–161. Postumus may have been limited to the care of Greek and Latin libraries located in the *basilica Trajani*, according to Pflaum's analysis.³² Another inscription indicates that Postumus's first office (or second one) was simply titled *proc. Augusti a bibliothecis*. A lower-level position for the new libraries in Trajan's forum (dedicated in 112) is certainly not impossible, but it seems unlikely, because no other similar position is known.³³ Further, this kind of office would indicate a return to the decentralized administration of individual city libraries, which Augustus had abandoned. Given that there were as many as twenty-eight libraries in Rome by the fourth century, this devolution of responsibility does not seem appropriate.³⁴ Unmistakably, Postumus was serving in an inferior library grade because it was his first office. Tiberius Aelius Largus subsequently may also have held a second-level office because his career was limited to one procuratorial office. But the most important change is revealed by Veturius Callistratus, who began his career as financial procurator of the emperor's libraries about 240, a previously unrecorded position. In these four cases, the essential point is that candidates were beginning their equestrian careers as library managers, then progressing to positions that had been equivalent to *a bibliothecis* in the early second century.

The conclusion must be that after Trajan's death in 117 an administrative reorganization increased the number of library procurators. The reasons for this division of responsibility are uncertain, because the inscriptional evidence identifies only parts of the administrative change. Nonetheless, the transition in imperial responsibilities is not surprising, since there had been substantial growth in the number of libraries during the first and second centuries. As a result, by mid-second century there was a need for more detailed administrative work in libraries, especially in areas of finance and personnel, leading to a more complex administration. Because the position of library director at the *ducenarius*

level is not documented after Maecianus, it is logical to infer that it disappeared. One office was no longer regarded as sufficient for administrative duties. This idea is reinforced by the decision made by Alexander Severus (222–235) to chose Julius Africanus, who had not served in any known official capacity, to establish a collection in the Pantheon. While it is conceivable that he was recommended for this task by a library director, it is more likely that Africanus, who dedicated his work *Kestoi* to the emperor, was selected because of his acquaintances at court.³⁵ Therefore, the *a bibliothecis* at the ducenariate grade disappeared after Maecianus, and a lesser office (or offices) was created at the *sexagenarius* rate of pay.³⁶

This premise is reinforced by similar reforms that occurred in central imperial ministries associated with libraries. After Valerius Eudaemon, responsibility for imperial correspondence was usually divided between an *ab epistulis Graecis* and an *ab epistulis Latinis*,³⁷ an alteration Hadrian implemented between 128 and 132. The two ministries superintended by the *proc. patrimonii* and *proc. a studiis* also underwent changes. Following the reign of Septimius Severus (193–211), the emperor's *patrimonium*, his personal properties, was merged with a new department, the *ratio privata* (private accounts) headed by the *magister rationis summae privatae* at the tricenarian level.³⁸ The old office *a patrimonio* ceased to exist. This reorganization was dictated by the immense growth of imperial possessions that had occurred in two centuries. At some imperial residences outside the capital, on the island of Capreae, at Tibur, at Praeneste, and at Antium, the emperors had constructed private libraries. There is no reliable information on the administration of these libraries,³⁹ but logically the result of this sort of expansion would eventually be greater fiscal scrutiny by bureaus distinct from the regular estate procurators, especially regional offices for crown property. By 240 fiscal supervision had become direct, according to Veturius Callistratus's title, *proc. rationum summarum privatarum bibliothecarum Augusti*, which corresponds with the organization of the *ratio privata*. Thus, Callistratus was a subordinate responsible for cash payments to libraries made from the treasury of the emperor's *ratio privata*, not an independent official in a department for libraries.

This administrative evolution has been postulated by one group of scholars to explain the disappearance of the independent ducenariate *a bibliothecis*.⁴⁰ Given the fortuitous nature of epigraphic discoveries, it is possible that this arrangement predated Callistratus. I suggest that the disappearance of the ducenariate director

may be linked with a division of his responsibilities between two lower-level procurators—one for public libraries, the other for libraries in imperial residences. Partial evidence for this dichotomous arrangement exists in the case of procurators like Postumus and Juncinus, who worked at Rome in other public equestrian positions. Largus's inscription was set up in the imperial palace at Praeneste, suggesting this possible separation of lower offices. The division may also be inferred from the distinctive titles for Eudaemon and Vestinus, who were both styled procurators of the Greek and Latin libraries, that is, libraries situated in public temples, baths, and porticos, but perhaps excluding small libraries in imperial residences such as the *Domus Augusti*, *Domus Tiberiana*, and countryside villas.

A second group of historians has preferred to amplify an argument that the responsibility for private libraries (or all libraries) was assumed by the *a studiis*, citing the two cases of Vestinus and Maecianus.⁴¹ It has even been proposed that this administrative union commenced with Suetonius, although emendation of existing readings is necessary for acceptance.⁴² According to this theory, part (or all) of the ducenariate office of a *bibliothecis* was assumed first by the *a studiis* in the early second century, and later by the *magister a studiis*, who replaced the *a studiis* in the third century. The case of Maecianus, who was styled *proc. a studiis et proc. bibliothecarum*, is the soundest basis for this theory. However, I believe Maecianus's unified post may have been created especially for his talent and rank. While he served as the emperor's advisor, it is possible that his library duties were limited to supervision of residential libraries because he would be in attendance with the emperor on a regular basis, even for travel outside Rome. Thus, his dual responsibilities were complementary and would not be too onerous because another procurator directed most city libraries.

On the whole, the creation of two equal lower-level library procurators followed by the financial management of libraries by the *ratio privata* after 200 correlates more with existing evidence than transfer of power to the *a studiis*. This arrangement also offers an explanation for the administrative organization in Rome during the later empire. After 240 it is reasonable to assume that the maintenance of public libraries was ultimately acquired by the city prefect of Rome (*praefectus urbi*), a senatorial position supervising many civic activities. One source, the *Augustan History*, suggests that the prefect was in charge at Rome, but the passage is not precise, nor is the source reliable.⁴³ After 300 the prefect

had supreme charge of the temples, public buildings, and imperial baths, where some libraries were located according to the *Notitia Dignitatum Occidentis IV*. Thus, all civic officials were under the prefect's disposition, rather than equivalent to him and directly responsible to the emperor, as they had been during the first and second centuries. However, the *Notitia* does not specifically mention library officials, and outside Rome regional divisions of the *ratio privata* managed finances for all imperial properties. Because direct evidence linking libraries with these officials does not exist in Rome, definitive statements about library administration in the fourth century are not possible.⁴⁴

Conclusion

The nature of library service at Rome is revealed by its administration. Libraries and directors obviously depended on the personal patronage of the emperor and his decisions regarding the range of services. There was no responsible body of citizens, elected or appointed in the modern sense, assigned authority for operations. Important decisions regarding financing, censorship, and organization were not subjected to public scrutiny or discussion. Consequently, Rome's city libraries were essentially passive institutions, greatly dependent on the emperor's appreciation. The historian Tacitus often deplored the arbitrary and casual suppression of authors and political partisans by emperors.⁴⁵ Suetonius also related specific episodes of censorship: Augustus wrote a letter to Pompeius Macer forbidding the publication of some of Caesar's minor works; Tiberius condemned the writings of the historian Aulus Cremutius Cordus, and forced him to commit suicide; Domitian ordered the execution of the historian Hermogenes of Tarsus, and the crucifixion of copyists.⁴⁶ Thus, without favorable imperial direction progress was not possible.

Societal values and traditions also contributed to a quiescent character: the buildings and collections were small because the reading public was limited. The library procurator did not consider promoting services. Collections were housed in buildings that were not public in the normal sense: for example, Suetonius records that Augustus and the Senate often met in the library beside the temple of Apollo. Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero also summoned senators to this library until the great fire of 64.⁴⁷ Vitruvius expressed this semipublic aspect clearly in *De architectura* 6.5.2, where he commented on the private dwellings of high-ranking nobles holding magistracies: they should have princely vestibules,

very spacious atria and peristyles, decorated park walkways, plus beautiful libraries and basilicas because public and private activities were transacted in their palaces. Therefore, the typical settings for a public library constructed by the emperors were designed for public gatherings and personal activities in temples, forums, and (after Trajan) in baths. It was not practical for the public to have access to the emperor's own residential collections, but it was possible to apply Vitruvius's private/public concept to the civic activities of the Roman populace.

Consequently, the procurator remained an administrative officer. Libraries were not an integral part of educational institutions or used frequently by cultivated Graeco-Roman writers. Pliny and his nephew exemplified the typical attitudes of the gentlemen scholars in the senatorial order toward research and private writings. The Elder Pliny regretted the lack of research: original study was seldom undertaken, discoveries were not critically examined, and avarice was held to be more important than the pursuit of knowledge.⁴⁸ The Younger Pliny complained about the constant distractions and monotony of Rome compared to the leisurely pace that permitted time for writing at his country villas (*Epistulae* 1.9 and 9.6). His opinion of research at Rome was less than enthusiastic, for he cautioned the historian Titinius Capito that writing ancient history would require great labor to assemble all the requisite materials (*Epistulae* 5.8). When necessary, Pliny was quite capable of researching beyond the confines of his own private collection. His scathing condemnation of Claudius's freedman secretary, Pallas, using information from senate decrees in Rome, is an illustrative case (*Epistulae* 8.6). But these occasions were infrequent.

Within a favorable political environment the consequences of such drawbacks were not serious. In times of political tranquillity emperors could indulge in literary details. Domitian (81–96) personally ordered copies of Alexandrian manuscripts made to replace ones lost in a fire at the beginning of his reign.⁴⁹ Generally speaking, Roman city libraries were important depositories of knowledge and had a salutary effect on creative writing and literary culture for a century and a half after the death of Augustus.⁵⁰ But the weaknesses inherent in library organization surfaced after the Antonine monarchs, when foreign wars and civil rebellions plagued Roman political life for a century. Beginning with Septimius Severus, the foundation of imperial power and government demonstrably rested in the Roman army, and the civilian aspect of the Principate rapidly decreased in significance. The reigns of

many emperors were inaugurated and concluded by treachery, assassination, or defeat on the battlefield. It was no longer possible to reside at Rome or display munificence in the old capital. The customary supervision of Rome's temples, libraries, aqueducts, public drains, statues, and new building schemes declined accordingly. During the third century the need for an independent library procurator associated with the imperial administration and properties vanished. The emperors seldom resided at their countryside villas in Campania or Latium, or their palaces in Rome; they were needed along the frontiers to repel invasions and quash usurpers. In these circumstances, the supervision of libraries languished and improvements were not considered.

The evolving administration of libraries in Rome closely parallels the growth of absolute monarchy and declining status of Rome during the Principate. Between the reigns of Augustus and Claudius, imperial freedmen were mostly responsible for libraries. Claudius's creation of the library procurator opened the way for more prestigious equites to occupy the office. During the following century, the office *a bibliothecis* attracted distinguished equestrians whose importance in the capital was sustained by an enlightened aristocratic predilection for books and book collecting that was fostered by a series of emperors. Pliny the Elder had lauded Gaius Asinius Pollio's decision to "make men's talents public" by establishing a library in the Atrium Libertatis, and Augustus's successors followed his example.⁵¹ They enjoyed the role of benefactor; indeed, conscientious rulers regarded it as a duty. In this setting libraries and their administrators were readily accepted features of Graeco-Roman cultural life.

By the second century, the *a bibliothecis* had become an integral part of the equestrian cursus, aided by the presence of the sovereign and related offices in the capital. After Trajan's reign the ducenariate office was divided between two procurators. This reorganized library structure did not survive the third-century disorders as a separate department. In the third century, the financial management of libraries was directly undertaken by the *ratio privata*. By the fourth century it seems the *praefectus urbi* was in charge at Rome, and librarians had disappeared completely at an administrative level. At Milan in 355, the newly appointed Caesar, Julian, selected a Greek physician, Oribasius, to care for his private book collection because he was the only confidant who shared Julian's worship of pagan gods.⁵² Two decades later, the historian Ammianus Marcellinus recorded that libraries in Rome were closed like tombs.⁵³ Clearly, the significance of these libraries

had rapidly declined and their administration was no longer a matter of interest to the emperors.

Notes

1. Heinz Gomoll, "Suetons bibliotheksgeschichtliche Nachrichten," *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 52 (1935): 381-388, discusses library foundations, holdings, restoration, portraits and statues, and directors.

2. Ervan Marec and Hans-Georg Pflaum, "Nouvelle inscription sur la carrière de Suétone, l'historien," *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres* (1952): 76-85 = *L'Année Epigraphique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1888-), no. 73 (1953).

3. The technique and potential of prosopography are discussed by Claude Nicolet, "Prosopographie et histoire sociale: Rome et Italie à l'époque républicaine," *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 3 (1970): 1209-1228; and André Chastagnol, "La prosopographie, méthode de recherche sur l'histoire du Bas Empire," *Annales* 3 (1970): 1229-1235.

4. Basic introductions are Otto Hirschfeld, *Die kaiserlichen Verwaltungsbeamten bis auf Diocletian*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1905), pp. 302-306 (hereafter cited as *KV*²); Clarence E. Boyd, *Public Libraries and Literary Culture in Ancient Rome* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1915), pp. 41-43; and André Langie, *Les Bibliothèques publiques dans l'ancienne Rome et dans le l'empire Romain* (Fribourg: Fragnière Frères, 1908), pp. 137-145.

5. T. P. Wiseman, "The Definition of 'Eques Romanus' in the Late Republic and Early Empire," *Historia* 19 (1970): 67-83.

6. H. -G. Pflaum, *Les procurateurs équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain* (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1950); and *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain*, 4 vols. (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1960-1961) are standard monographs.

7. See Gérard Boulvert, *Esclaves et affranchis impériaux sous le Haut-Empire romain* (Naples: Jovene, 1970), for freedmen procurators.

8. Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 B.C.-A.D. 337)* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1977), pp. 83-110.

9. Pflaum, *Procurateurs*, pp. 236, 253-254.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.

11. R. P. Saller, "Promotion and Patronage in Equestrian Careers," *Journal of Roman Studies* 70 (1980): 44-63.

12. Suetonius, *De viris illustribus: grammaticis* 20; and Edmund Groag, Arthur Stein, and Leiva Petersen (eds.), *Prosopographia Imperii Romani Saeculi I, II, III*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1933-), part 4, p. 223, no. 357 (hereafter cited as *PIR*²).

13. Suetonius, *De viris illustribus: grammaticis* 21.

14. *L'Année Epigraphique* no. 26 (1960) = *American Journal of Archaeology* 63 (1959): 384 = *Museum Helveticum* 17 (1960): 118; and *PIR*², part 4, p. 243, no. 447.

15. Theodor Mommsen et al. (eds.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin: G. Reimerum, 1863-), vol. 10, no. 1739 (hereafter cited as *CIL*). Hermann Dessau (ed.), *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892-1916), no. 1587.

16. *CIL* 14, no. 2916.

17. B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt et al. (eds.), *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (London: Egyptian Exploration Society, 1898-), no. 412, lines 63-68; and *PIR*², part 4, pp. 127-128, no. 124.

18. *CIL* 6, no. 2132.

19. Pflaum, *Procurateurs*, pp. 36-42.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 249-250. For background on the libraries in the Broucheion and Serapeum, see Peter M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), vol. 1, pp. 320-335.

21. Saller, "Promotion and Patronage," pp. 55-57.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-55.

23. See Jacques Gascou, "Suétone et l'ordre équestre," *Revue des Etudes Latines* 54 (1976): 257-277, emphasizing this point.

24. P. van de Woestyne, "Un ami d'Ovid, C. Iulius Hyginus," *Musée Belge: Revue de Philologie Classique* 33 (1929): 31-45.

25. For his writings, see Paul Wessner, "Melissus," in August Pauly, Georg Wissowa, Wilhelm Kroll, and Karl Mittelhaus (eds.), *Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1893-), vol. 15 (1931), cols. 532-534.

26. Pflaum, *Carrières*, vol. 1, pp. 11-13, and vol. 3, p. 957. Also Ronald Syme, *History in Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 73-74. The date 18-17 B.C. proposed for Macer's office by J. Schwartz, "Pompeius Macer et la jeunesse d'Ovide," *Revue de Philologie, de Littérature et d'Histoire anciennes* 25 (1951): 188-189, is too early.

27. Suetonius, *Divus Claudius* 42.2.

28. *Ibid.*, 41.2-3.

29. Pflaum, *Carrières*, vol. 1, pp. 219-224; G. B. Townend, "The Hippo Inscription and the Career of Suetonius," *Historia* 10 (1961): 99-109; Francesco Della Corte, *Suetonio eques Romanus*, 2nd ed. (Florence: Nuova Italia, 1967), pp. 5-25; Claude Baurain, "Suétone et l'inscription d'Hippone," *Etudes Classiques* 41 (1976): 124-144; Jacques Gascou, "Nouvelles données chronologiques sur la carrière de Suétone," *Latomus* 37 (1978): 436-444, attempts to extend his administrative career to c. 128; but his evidence is not conclusive; see Ronald Syme, "Travels of Suetonius Tranquillus," *Hermes* 109 (1981): 105-117, for Suetonius's Palatine career.

30. *PIR*², part 4, p. 293, no. 623.

31. Th. Mayer-Maly, "L. Volusius Maecianus," in *Real-Encyclopädie*, vol. 9A (1961), cols. 904-906.

32. Pflaum, *Carrières*, vol. 1, pp. 316-319.

33. Edmond van't Dack, "*A studiis, a bybliothecis*," *Historia* 12 (1963): 180, notes that the genitive *divi Trajani* may be considered to establish chronological order for this office, not to define the libraries he directed.

34. *Notitia Regionum Urbis XIV cum breviariis suis* and *Curiosum Urbis Romae Regionum XIV cum breviariis suis* in Henri Jordan, *Topographie der Stadt Rom in Alterthum*, 2 vols. in 4 (1871-1907; reprint ed., Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1970), vol. 2, p. 565; and *Mirabilia Romae* in vol. 2, p. 637.

35. W. Kroll and J. Sickenberger, "Julius Africanus," in *Real-Encyclopädie*, vol. 10 (1917), cols. 116-125; and A. von Harnack, "Julius Africanus, der Bibliothekar des Kaisers Alexander Severus," in *Aufsätze Fritz Milkau gewidmet* (Leipzig: Karl Hiersemann, 1921), pp. 142-146.

36. Dack, "*A studiis, a bybliothecis*," p. 184, suggests that Trajan created the first directorate at the *sexagenarius* level and that Postumus may have been an adjutant for Suetonius. Pflaum, "Procurator," in *Real-Encyclopädie*,

vol. 23 (1957), cols. 1249–1250, credits Trajan with separating the duce-nariate procurator and sexagenariate *bibliothecae Ulpiae*. Previously, in *Procurateurs*, pp. 56–57, 64, and 66, he had credited Trajan with creating the Ulpian position and Hadrian with the ducenariate position.

37. G. B. Townend, "The Post *ab epistulis* in the Second Century," *Historia* 11 (1961): 375–381.

38. Arnold Kränzlein, "Patrimonium," and "a patrimonio," in *Real-Encyclopädie*, suppl. 10 (1965), cols. 495–498, 500–502.

39. For Capreae: Carl F. W. Weichardt, *Tiberius's Villa and Other Roman Buildings on the Ile [sic] of Capri* (Leipzig: K. F. Koehler, 1900), p. 113. For Tibur: Jeppe Tønsberg, *Offentlige biblioteker i Romerriget i det 2. Århundrede e Chr.* (Copenhagen: Danmarks Biblioteksskole, 1976), pp. 60–65; and Heinz Kähler, *Hadrian und seine Villa bei Tivoli* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1950), pp. 106–117, and tables 1–5. For Praeneste: *CIL* 14, no. 2916. For Antium: *CIL* 10, no. 6638 (col. 1, 12; col. 2, 22, 29; col. 3, 3); and Flavius Philostratus, *Vita Apolloni* 8.20. I have not included private libraries in Rome, such as Gianfilippo Carettoni, "The House of Augustus—1," *Illustrated London News* 29 September 1969, pp. 24–25. The evidence for Tacitus serving as Titus's private head librarian is not conclusive: cf. Nicholas Reed, "Some Neglected Evidence on the Early Career of Tacitus," *Classical Quarterly* 26 (1976): 309–314; and Revilo P. Oliver, "Tacitus—Librarian?" *Classical Quarterly* 29 (1979): 223–224. The source that depicts Lucianus serving as Diocletian's private librarian is a forgery. Cf. Pierre Batiffol, "L'épître de Theonas à Lucien," *Bibliothèques de l'Ecole des Chartes* 47 (1886): 336–340 = *Bulletin Critique* 7 (1886): 155–160; T. Mommsen, "Brief des Bischofs Theonas," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1905–1913), vol. 6, pp. 649–652, reprinted in A. von Harnack, "Der gefälschte Brief des Bischofs Theonas an der Kammerherren Lucian," *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 24 (1903): 109–113.

40. Hirschfeld, *KV*², pp. 303–304, emphasizes financial control separate from scientific direction of several individual libraries by librarians; Langie, *Bibliothèques publiques*, p. 140; M. Rostovtzeff, "Fiscus," in *Real-Encyclopädie*, vol. 6 (1909), col. 2400; and Kränzlein, "Patrimonium," col. 496.

41. T. Mommsen, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 6, pp. 651–652; B. Kuebler, "a studiis," in *Real-Encyclopädie*, vol. 4A (1931), col. 397; Pflaum, *Procurateurs*, p. 241. Hirschfeld, *KV*², pp. 305 and 332–334, rejects this argument.

42. Dack, "a studiis, a bybliotheceis," pp. 180–184. A further problem is that Eudaemon did not hold these offices simultaneously, thus interrupting the period between Suetonius and Maecianus.

43. See my analysis of this passage: "A Reappraisal of Roman Libraries in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*," *Journal of Library History* 16 (1981): 559–560. Hirschfeld, *KV*², p. 306, gives some support to this passage. André Chastagnol, *La préfecture urbaine à Rome sous la Bas-Empire* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1960), p. 289, accepts it.

44. See Chastagnol, *Préfecture*, pp. 45–46, for administration of temples and baths. Prefects erected various statues in the baths of Trajan (*CIL* 6, no. 1670), Caracalla (*CIL* 6, nos. 1170–73a), and Diocletian (*CIL* 6, no. 31881) where libraries were situated.

45. Frederick H. Cramer, "Bookburning and Censorship in Ancient Rome," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 6 (1945): 157–196, outlines Augustan and Tiberian forms of repression.

46. Suetonius, *Divus Julius* 56.7; *Tiberius* 61.3; and *Domitianus* 10.1.

47. Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 29.3; and David L. Thompson, "The Meetings of the Roman Senate on the Palatine," *American Journal of Archaeology* 85 (1981): 335-339.

48. Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 2.45.117-118.

49. Suetonius, *Domitianus* 20.1.

50. The useful role of libraries is emphasized by Boyd, *Public Libraries*, pp. 52-60 and 66-69; Evelyn H. Clift, *Latin "Pseudepigrapha": A Study in Literary Attributions* (Baltimore: J. H. Furst, 1945), pp. 38-39; and Anthony J. Marshall, "Library Resources and Creative Writing at Rome," *Phoenix* 30 (1976): 252-264.

51. Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 35.2.9.

52. Julian, *Epistula ad senatum populumque Atheniensem* 7, b-c. The identification of the "librarian" as Euhemerus, an African sophist, is discussed by George W. Robinson, "The Librarian of Julian Apostate," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 26 (1915): 165-168. However, see H. O. Schröder, "Oreibasios," in *Real-Encyclopädie*, suppl. 7 (1940), col. 798; and Glenn W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 50.

53. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum gestarum libri* 14.6.18.